

Merry Christmas, 2018

Dear friends and family members,

This year at Christmas, Maurie is home with us! Her college is over, her job down south ended, and Will is up here. So, he flew down to her, loaded a U-Haul with all of her stuff, and now we have another dog, another cat, and another cute couple on Irwin Court. The two young cats have not entirely split the house upstairs to downstairs but pretty much



Mocha helping make the bed.

Deanna gave me Elephant Seals for my 70th birthday. We barbequed oysters, ran the dogs on a (different) beach, and started our new decades.



Elephant Seals at Point Reyes.

Maurie took on a new adventure while also being a Social Worker; this is her new puppy, Princess Leia. She's not quite as easy to scoop up and hold after over half a year and over half again the size but she's *so* soft and has a great song: "RwOOoo; RwOOooo!"



Leia and Deanna at Maurie's old place.

I got invited to help teach the Advanced Photography class at Mountain View High School again (first time was 16 years ago). I talk about Yosemite geology more than pictures. If they want to take a photo of a waterfall, they have to listen to me tell them about Pleistocene glaciation, granitic rock, and uplift history of the Sierra. These are gifted and talented artists and it was a blessing to see them do their creativity.



Advanced Photography class.

http://www.diggles.com/photography/2018/2018-03-17_Yosemite_critique/



Student presentation shot.

The fruit trees were taking over the barbecue and the space where the broken hot tub was not being used so we went back to the same shop as 15 years ago and matched the stone. A little use of a rock hammer and a grinder, and it is a nice surface; cooking out there is nice.



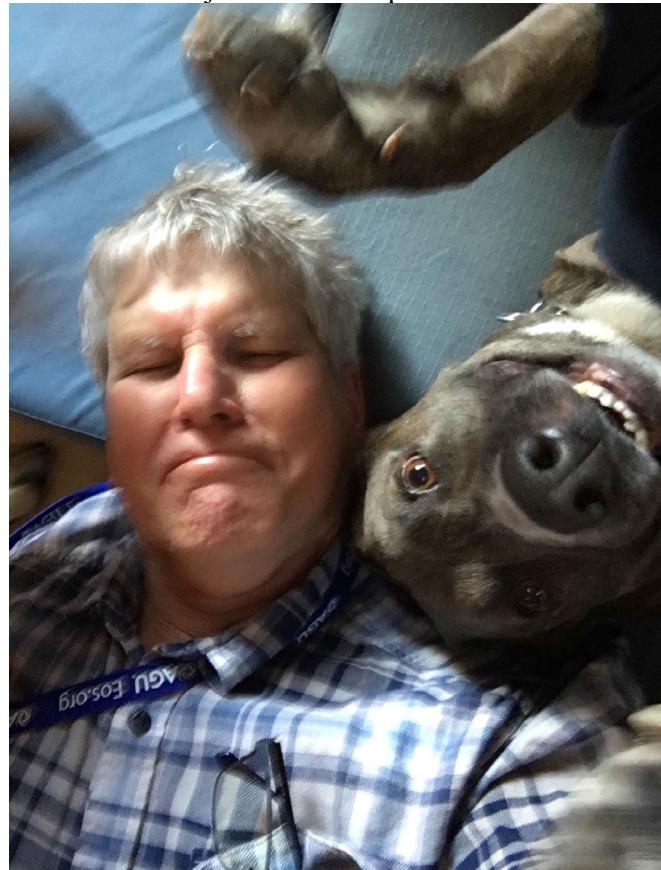
Hewn stone.

Leia settled right in and stole one of their dog beds.



Princess Leia.

The dogs watch me to be sure I don't escape, ever. I was down in their territory working on a latch on a cabinet door and it was too much for Mattie to resist; she had to come join me and help.



Best-ever photo bomb.

In June, our friend Linda came out from Kansas to visit the whales ...and us. We had a grand time at the Cliff House, the botanical garden at Cal, and Marin County looking over the Golden Gate. It was a delight having Linda visit out here from the mid-continent. I forgot; did we provide a little earthquake for her also?



Linda and Deanna north of Ocean Beach in San Francisco.

Will and Maurie have known each other since 11th grade. They've been a couple for at least a year. Will used to drive the hundreds of miles from up here in the Bay Area down to her place in the San Fernando Valley. She flew up to visit him when the folks at his job site at Calpine were moved to an evacuation shelter during the Mendocino Complex Fire. So, they are not only wonderfully devoted to each other, they're quite cute, huh?



Will and Maurie.

Speaking of fires; this one was below the radar on the national news. This is a picture I took of the Cat Fire on the Kaibab Plateau in northern Arizona this year. It was about 4,000 acres so much smaller than the tragic Camp Fire in Paradise, California.



Fire on the Plateau.

My group at the U.S. Geological Survey had a face-to-face meeting in Flagstaff where I got to work with my colleagues and visit some of the authors whose papers I review. While we were there, we got to go out to the crater field where the Apollo astronauts were trained about geology by our folks at USGS. We made an evening trip to Lowell Observatory which where Pluto was discovered.



A bunch of scruffy Earth scientists on the basalt.

After a decade and a half, our old Weber needed replacement. We've grilled rain or shine commonly a few times a week. This new unit has a rotisserie so we turned a 23-pound turkey on the spit for Thanksgiving (and had two 16-pounders in the oven).



This one has a weather-resistant cabinet for supplies including the tank. The two shelves are not attached yet in this shot.

Under "one thing leads to another," Deanna wanted to replant the flowerbed along the driveway. Well, it is about 40 feet long so I broke out the little Honda rototiller and made a nice starting point. Well, once Deanna added plants, I'd never be able to get in there to put in a ditch for my fantasy drip system. It has six valves and a control unit that talks to my iPhone.



Two pipes to the front and four pipes to the back.

We found this nice set of pots, drilled holes in the bottoms, and put in a pump. As raccoons and neighbor cats use it for drinking water plus some loss to evaporation, one of the valves on the new drip system will top off the fountain a bit each week.



This also gave our pet rocks a home.

Maurie takes Halloween seriously. Here she is with BatBear. Mattie was Wonder Woman and Rajah was R2-D2.



Dressed up for Halloween.

We had 13 people over for Thanksgiving to help eat the three turkeys. We went out and bought a bunch of Glad Ware containers so everybody could take home another dinner or two. Decorations came next.



Rajah and his Christmas tree.

Our friend Lara is in Girl Scouts. She and the other Scouts in her Troop wanted to do the Digital Photography Merit Badge. So, we had a classroom session at Pioneer Elementary School one early evening so they could learn about light, color, and holding steady. We did a little Photoshopping (crop, levels, color balance, saturation). Then we took them out to Coyote Hills Regional Park one late afternoon when the sidelight was nice and steep. We did zoom-in, zoom-out, and Rembrandt lighting. The marsh was a favorite place until the sun went behind the ridge so we hiked to the top of the ridge and got San Francisco Bay to get the last rays of the sunset. The students turn in their best shots next week and everybody will get first place.



Young photographers on the ridgeline

Maurie moved from her old job in southern California to a new one up here. Her second interview was later the same morning that the kids got here with the U-Haul. Deanna went from one side of the street to the other at U.C. San Francisco (UCSF Health). She was a nurse Case Manager making discharge plans work and now she's a Nurse Navigator making the

intake side of the system work better. Mike is still at USGS (42 years now).



Angel on Top.

With Will helping Maurie, here's the annual shot of the Angel on Top.

Have a safe and wonderful Christmas and New Year,

-Michael, Deanna, Maurie, and Will
-Mocha, YoYo, Rajah, Mattie, and Bear